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**JOBS AND THE ECONOMY**

Party Chairman

Secretary-General

Dear Comrades and Friends

A very good morning!

That was a very heartwarming video. It reminds me of why serve.

Today, I would like to share on our Singapore jobs and the economy.

*The importance of jobs*

We all have come across family members, friends, or colleagues who had to leave their jobs for personal reasons. Some, to take time out to care for their children. Others, to take care of their elderly parents, or because of a sudden illness or disability.

I once met a resident who was finding it very difficult to obtain a job. She was very articulate and highly educated. As we chatted a bit more, she opened up and shared that she was a victim of domestic abuse, this had impacted her ability to stay in a job. When she finally divorced her husband, she had no job, no savings and no home.

When we met her, she was staying in a shelter and it was obvious that her spirit was broken. I thought - *How did she come to this stage!* Unfortunately, these situations do happen. She met with a social service officer and in a few months, she did find a job.

She moved out of the shelter, was more confident, and her life is now shaping up!

So a job can really turn one's life around.

As Branch activists - *when we see people around us facing challenges like these, do we reach out and can we do more?*

### *Challenges in the early years of Singapore*

Going back to the early days of Singapore. Survival, and ensuring a better life for Singaporeans were paramount, and providing jobs for Singaporeans can uplift lives.

Since then, our economy has done well, our quality of life has improved, and unemployment rates have decreased.

However, we faced many trials over the past 52 years -- for example, when the British troops withdrew in the 1970s, the Asian Financial Crisis in 1997 and the Global Financial Crisis in 2008. The Singapore economy was affected and jobs were impacted.

It must have seemed very impossible at that point in time, but the PAP government made good and bold decisions and we survived each challenge.

### *New challenges ahead*

Singapore is now facing a new challenge which impacts our jobs and economy.

Disruption arising from technology, in areas such as robotics and artificial intelligence, would drive greater automation. This can be felt across the job spectrum. *How will automation and technology impact your line of work?*

The PAP government has also been deeply focused on being ready for the future, and how to prepare our workforce. As such the Committee on the Future Economy was established along with Industry Transformation Maps.

For example, in the retail industry, now with many customers shopping online, roles such as cashiers and sales assistants can potentially evolve to roles such as brand advisors or personal shoppers.

To support individuals to upgrade their skills, Workforce Singapore and E2i have been hard at work, assisting individuals and companies. For example, through the Adapt and Grow programmes and SkillsFuture.

We are now executing on these plans.

### *Changing the mindsets of Human Capital*

Now I would like to touch on Human Capital.

Employers, particularly their HR departments, play a very important role as they are the gatekeepers to job opportunities.

In relation to jobs and skills upgrading, *are all employers reviewing their workforce, and having an understanding on what jobs might be disrupted and the skills upgrading that is required for the future?* Employers need to do this not only for their business but as a responsibility to their employees.

Furthermore, employers usually expect employees who are the exact fit or “ready-made”.

In reality, this is not the case. *Can employers apply more flexibility and give opportunities to employees who display the right attitudes, and then train for fit?*

*Are employers open to older Singaporeans, those who have been retrenched, or mothers (and fathers) who are returning to work?*

Evidently, times and challenges have changed, and a change in mindset by employers is required so as to provide more opportunities to those around us.

There are some good examples of the above, but the sense is that this change in mindset is not yet pervasive.

No doubt, there is huge ground to cover, and perhaps one way to cover more ground is for the PAP government to more actively involve the HR community, those who have applied these best practices, and those who have effectively used the government schemes; to share and inspire the rest of the community. This includes advocating to senior management of companies to drive the change.

*At the ground level, as Branch activists, do we know the latest developments in jobs and the economy, and the different government support available, so that we can continue to be effective in serving our residents?*

Now a few words in Mandarin on mindsets.

同志们，早上好！

一个人的心态非常重要。

它对以往所发生的事，和现在的状况以及未来即可能发生的事都有一定的影响。

我们的先辈漂过海南来新加坡，就是为了寻找更美好的生活。他们刻苦耐劳，不断地为自己创造机会并闯出一番春天来。

大家需要努力学习，勇往直前和保持乐观的心态，

我相信我们会比我们的先辈青出于蓝。

希望大家可以改变心态并拥有不屈不挠的精神。

所谓欲穷千里目，更上一层楼。大家一定要加油！

*Moving forward*

Singapore now faces a new set of challenges. Where we end up, depends on how well we can execute on our strategies together.

My late grandparents, Ah Kong and Ah Por, were immigrants from Hainan Island. Like others, life was very tough in the early years. Ah Kong was the breadwinner and Ah Poh stayed at home to take care of the four children.

Ah Kong worked very hard as a clerk and warehouse assistant, and regularly worked "OT" to earn more money to support the family.

Ah Kong's employment provided the means for his four children to receive education, and the foundation to gain employment and a better quality of life.

In Ah Kong's time, working very hard at his jobs all his life was enough to take care of the family and future. *Presently, can anybody be sure their jobs are so secure and that the same attitude will be relevant?*

In closing, our world now is far too complex to take the same path and journey at it alone. While government can provide the strategic direction and means of support, it is important we work together – employers and employees, to adapt, and to take jobs and skills development seriously. Once we have the right strategies and workforce in place, we can safeguard an enduring economy.

At the same time, we need to strive towards being a more fair and inclusive society, giving a chance to all Singaporeans, and reaching out to those who have fallen on difficult times.

I am confident that Singapore will be able to overcome these challenges, and I look forward to better jobs, a better economy, and a better future for all Singaporeans.

Thank you!

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